

A
C O P Y
O F T W O
L E T T E R S
T O

The Rev. Mr *Alexander Moncrieff*,
Minister at Abernethy ;

Relating to his new constitution of Synod,
and their pretended censures: Containing
also some ANSWERS unto, of *October*
upon, his Letter directed unto his friends at
Aberdeen, dated 3d November 1788.

By an Elder of the Associate Kirk-Session of PERTH.

*Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. 1 Thim. ii. 23.
But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed, Gal. ii. 11.*

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T O

The judicious and impartial

R E A D E R.

I OWN it may justly be said unto me, with respect to my knowledge and experience in religion, when compared with Mr Moncrieff, that I am but a youth, and he has been a man of war in the church from his youth: also in comparison of his learning and knowledge in the scriptures, I know only as it were the baptism of John, and have need to be taught the word and way of the Lord more perfectly.

Some are of opinion, that this Letter to Aberdeen should receive such an answer as Hezekiah appointed to be given, Isa. xxxvi. 21. that is, no answer at all. But as I desire not to count the author an enemy, so I purpose to intreat him as a father; 1 Tim. v. i. 'Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father;' 2 Theff. iii. 15. 'Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' And as the elders who rule well are to be counted worthy of double honour; so those who rule ill (or with force, rigour and cruelty) are to be resisted against, and withstood to the face.

My mind on this head (twenty three years ago) may be seen in my Reasons of dissent, (published in the year 1737) pages 18, 19, line 15, &c. when I had not the remotest thought of meeting with an occasion of this nature, which discovers unto me

that we have need of the armour of righteousness on the right-hand, as well as on the left, 2 Cor. vi. 7.

Possibly some may *object*, or enquire, Why I make so free with, or so much use of the scripture.

I *answer*, Because it is the more sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed: likewise because it is profitable, not only for doctrine, but for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, &c. It is also a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path: more especially considering that it is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; which, together with the shield of faith, is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16, 17. And if ever there was a fiery dart or squeebe thrown into the church, this controversy about the burgeses-oath, together with the said new constitution, (in my view) is a considerable one. Should not our hearts be sad to see the city, the place of our fathers sepulchres, thereby consumed, and the gates thereof burnt up with the fire of intestine divisions and contentions thereanent.

Who would have thought that Mr Moncrieff or his brethren would have been so ignorant of Satan's devices, who is desiring to have Christ's servants and disciples, that he may sift them as wheat? and sometimes gets liberty so to do. But what shall we say, while it is evident that there are no greater cowards upon earth than even Christ's disciples are, when left to themselves; see Mark xiv. 50. they all forsook him and fled. And yet, at other times, through Christ strengthening them, they are able to do all things.

It ought likewise to be remembered, that when the sons of God do meet, Satan cometh also among them, or in the midst of them, (as Job i. 6. in the margin)



margin) and does all he can to stop or mar any good turn that is going on in the church.

But, to return; let us consider, that as many are teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, so we are commanded to search the scriptures, and try the spirits: and the Bereans are commended for searching and trying even the apostle Paul's doctrine by the scriptures, Acts xvii. 11. *Secondly*, If I make not a wrong use or a bad use of the scriptures, I cannot be justly accused of making too free with or too much use of them; for they are the only rule given to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him for ever: yea, they ought to be the men of our council; yea, our only or chief counsellors, and our song in this house of our pilgrimage. *Thirdly*, "They are the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined; and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined by them, and in whose sentence we are to rest." This can be no other, but the holy Spirit speaking in the scripture. See Confession of faith, chap. I. parag. 10. And if the law of God be written or hid in our hearts, it will influence us to make a holy and reverend use thereof in our thoughts, words and actions.

Objection. But the devil himself can cite scriptures, and say, It is written, it is written, Mat. iv. 36.

Answer. Shall we forbear to quote scriptures, and apply them justly, because Satan quotes and applies them unjustly? We may as well say, we will forbear being truly religious, because he transforms himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15.

Know

Know also, that several of the scriptures quoted are only sometimes alluded to, at other times they are or may be applied. I leave it to the wisdom of the judicious and impartial reader or hearers either to allude or apply as they find just occasion. May each be helped in their station to study to show themselves approved in this respect, rightly dividing the word of truth, that so they may be as workmen that need not be ashamed, 2 Tim. ii. 15.

If any shall say, I print because I receive profit, or outward gain thereby; I hereby inform them, that such who say so accuse me both rashly and falsely; for I never received profit or outward gain by printing: and if I had not other and better motives, the public should not see my writ nor print either.

Objection. But though you print not for money or outward gain, yet possibly you print or publish your mind for ostentation and vain-glory; as the Pharisees did all their works to be seen of men.

Answer. No doubt it would look prideful or enthusiastic like in me to say that the Spirit within me constraineth me to speak. But, if my heart do not far deceive me, the world or the public see no more of my religion, or of my mind anent public affairs, in the church or elsewhere, but what I cannot get hid from them with a good conscience. May not such a word as this have weight, Mark viii. 38. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and
"of my words in this adulterous and sinful genera-
"tion, of him also shall the son of man be ashamed
"when he cometh in the glory of his Father,
"with the holy angels." Ought we not to follow Christ's example, of whom it is said, that the zeal of his Father's house did eat him up.

Neither had I the remotest thought of appearing any more in print on this subject, had not Mr Moncrieff

crieff appeared again (in his foresaid letter to Aberdeen) with his former fiery spirit, (Luke ix. 54.) and furious zeal against the religious clause of the burgeses-oath, and those who maintain the lawfulness thereof, or are in conjunction with them; in order to express his zeal against their entering into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, while they follow not him and his brethren of the new constitution in their new and unprecedented notions anent the said religious clause, Luke ix. 49, 50.

I remember that my dear father, and reverend minister, Mr Wilson, told me, with much seeming weight on his spirit, that he was afraid of new terms of communion, by expressing himself to me to the following purpose; 'I am afraid,' said he, 'of our going out of the house furr with respect to our terms of communion.' Likewise my dear father, the reverend Mr Ralph Erskine, told me, that the said Mr Wilson often told him, that he, to wit, Mr Wilson, was afraid he would not be able to draw in a yoke with Mr Moncrieff, because of his forward and violent driving matters too far in the above respect; and I am pretty certain, that the said Mr Wilson was instrumental in keeping Mr Moncrieff and others from going to some of these extremes wherein they have now fallen.

But here I must stop a little and say, 'Our fathers where are they? the prophets do not live for ever;' they are not suffered to continue by reason of death. And though it be ground of thankfulness and encouragement that the residue of the Spirit is with the Lord, and that the spirit of Elijah resteth, in some measure, upon some Elishas in our day;

day ; and though we have a goodly number of instructors in Christ ; yet it is for a lamentation that we ' have not many fathers : ' yea it seems that some novices, 1 Tim. iii. 6. and v. 22. have been too suddenly or rashly sent forth, who have fallen very foully, by reproaching and bringing railing accusations and pretended censures against their fathers and brethren, whose grey hairs being found in the way of righteousness, required more respect and better treatment. And shall we stand silently by and see our brethren, yea our fathers and ministers, not only wounded, but counted as slaughter sheep in their names and offices ? Shall lies, industriously spread against them, make us hold our peace ? ' These ten times ' (or these twelve years) ' have they reproached them, yet ' they are not ashamed, but harden themselves against them,' as it is in the margin, Job xix. 3. How sinful and dangerous is it, thus to touch God's people, who are as the apple of his eye ? and yet more dangerous to touch his anointed, and do his prophets harm. I chuse rather to suffer affliction with them, and to be a companion of these who are thus unjustly used and reproached, by being made a spectacle and gazing-stock to angels and men.

I remember that the said reverend Mr Ralph Erskine told me, that he was in hazard of being lifted up or exalted with the good news he received from abroad and elsewhere, of the Lord's blessing his labours, and doing good by them, both at home and abroad ; and that he thought this thorn of the flesh, or messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet or keep him low, viz. The unjust and cruel treatment he was meeting with from his brethren of the new constitution, 2 Cor. xii. 7.

I remember also, that some short time after the breach in the synod 1747, I was seized with a violent cholic, which threatned present death to me in my apprehension, and in the view of some others; and when thinking on the broken case of the church, I thought, that if Mr Moncrieff, and all his brethren of the new constitution, were present at my death-bed-side, I would say unto them, with respect to their pretended or threatned censures, as their master said to Peter in another case, Matth. xxvi. 52. 'Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword:' and by the bye, we use to say, 'They never gave with the sword but got with the scabbard.' This was my view of their rash and unlawful pretended censures then; and I never changed my mind concerning them since.

Some *object*, That those of the new constitution are not guilty of any fault; otherways, say they, why do not their brethren, who were the majority of the synod, and consequently regularly and rightly constitute, censure them, or suspend and depose them, for their schism and calumny, &c.?

I *answer*, It is evident for the present, yea these twelve years and more, that these brethren of the new constitution seem to be in a spiritual fever or rage. Now, would any wise or reasonable man take the rod of correction to punish his son or brother for what they say or do when they are roving and raging in a hot fever?

See, by comparing Gen. xxxvii. 2, with Gen. xlii. 21. how long the fever of envy * lasted with

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Joseph's

* Act. vii. 9, 10. 'The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.' It is remarkable and worth the noting, that the envious, and murdering, and lying dis-

Joseph's brethren, to wit more than twenty two years. But did Joseph resent it in such a way as he had power to do? No; he wept when they spoke of that, Gen. l. 17. So the synod desires rather to weep in secret for their pride, and to pity and pray for them, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' This also is the way which Moses took with Aaron after he had made the golden calf, Deut. ix. 18, 19, 20. 'And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights, I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which you sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger: for I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron, to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.'

Objection. 'But are not the spirits of the prophets subject to the prophets? for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints,' 1 Cor. xiv. 32, 33.

Answer. The spirit which these seem to be acted by at present is subject to none but those who see eye to eye with them, especially with respect to the burges's-oath, and their new and schismatical constitution; whereby it is manifest that they (and not their master) are the authors of the present confusion and division that is in the church of the association. See, for proof of this, page 11 of their own new constitution acts, &c. where it is asserted
and

position and practice of Joseph's brethren, did not in the least deprive him of God's love, and special presence and protection, 'God was with him.'

and inserted, That the approbation of their new constitution, and likewise of their rash or false sentence of synod in April 1746, condemning the religious clause of some burgess-oaths, is unanimously added to their *formula* of questions to be put unto and required of young men before licence, and ministers before ordination.

Howbeit the associate synod has warned those who are under their inspection to beware of them who have so rashly and suddenly separated and gone out from them, and are troubling and distracting the minds of the Lord's people with words and questions of doubtful disputation, tending also to blast their brethrens ministry and reputation. The synod also has declared and laid open the sinfulness and nullity of their pretended acts and sentences or censures. See act of the associate synod met at Stirling, October 29th 1747.

Objection. But may it not be thought foolish in me to endeavour to convince Mr Moncrieff and his brethren of the evil and error of their ways, when he and they have hitherto despised all that their learned fathers and brethren have spoken or written on this subject; yea, have treated them, and likewise their words and writings, with as much contempt and disdain as Jacob's sons treated and despised Joseph and his dreams? Gen. xxxvii. 18, 19, 20. Yea, they seem to be conviction-proof, (which is the ordinary case with erring or straying ministers) or past feeling as to any due sense of the disorder and confusion they have introduced into the Lord's house.

I answer, This indeed is for a lamentation; and likewise proves that they seem to be 'wiser in their own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' *Secondly,* It may teach me or others not

to be surprised or offended though they should express themselves thus anent the following letters, viz.

‘ Let us hear what this babler will say.’

And though Mr Moncrieff takes his own way of writing, and says, He must be indulged in taking his own way of answering or writing*; yet I shall not desire him, nor any other, to indulge me in my own way of writing or answering, unless they find just ground so to do.

Objec. But how do you prove, that the brethren of the new constitution are in a spiritual fever or rage?

Ans. When neither scripture nor reason, nor the footsteps of the flock, nor the laudable acts of reforming assemblies, nor their own confession of faith; no, nor the act and testimony, nor present bond and covenant, will convince men or ministers of their errors and crooked ways; this is a plain evidence that they are in a spiritual fever or rage, and that they know not what manner of spirit they are of, Luke ix. 55.

Had I not been eye or ear witness to the breach in the associate synod at Bristo church near Edinburgh, upon the 9th and 10th of April 1747; and also eye and ear witness to that meeting of the presbytery of Perth and Donfermline at Perth upon the 5th of May thereafter, I had been deceived or imposed upon, as well as many others, by the gross misrepresentations of matters that passed there.

What a gross and manifest falshood is it to say and publish to the world, that there was no new or unprecedented constitution of synod in Mr Gib's house upon the 10th of April 1747? or that there was

* See for proof of this, page 4th of his own animadversions on Fancy still no Faith.

was no new or unprecedented constitution of presbytery in the New Church at Perth, upon the 5th. of May 1747 ?

I said it before, and now I say it again, Shall lies industriously spread, and so often repeated, make us hold our peace ? May we hope that the Lord, in due time, will sweep away these refuges of lies ? My heart smites me to this hour for my silence at both these places ; for though I was no present member in either of these meetings, yet I might have insisted for liberty to speak as a member of that body which they were so evidently rending and tearing to pieces by their foresaid new and unprecedented constitutions. And though the above might have seemed rash or precipitant in me, yet I have no ground to be very fond or forward that way ; for I never had more difficulty in keeping a good conscience than in a court of conscience, which made me afraid to meddle without a clear call.

Let none from hence infer, that these are not the thrones of judgment, the courts of divine appointment, because there are contentions or divisions among them ; for we may see from Acts xv. 1, 2, 7. that even in the first New-testament-synod there was not only disputing, but no small disputing or dissension among them ; but no separation nor division took place there.

It likewise deserves to be noticed, that Mr George Brown chused rather to have no elder from Perth, than to have one who would not approve of their new constitution ; for he did not desire his elder's name to be called, [though he was present in the church at Perth, and chosen by the session] because it was known he would not approve of their new and unprecedented constitution ; and neither ministers

sters nor elders names who belonged to the old presbytery's roll were called or mentioned in this new roll, except those that they knew to be approvers of their said new and unprecedented constitution. Notice also, that when they get an elder implicitly to follow them, or approve of their said constitution, they can make him sustain the place or character of a whole presbytery ; as they do with Patrick Edmond, ruling elder from the associate session of Balfron, who is all they have for the associate presbytery of Glasgow. First sederunt in Mr Gib's house near Edinburgh. See page 1st of their acts and proceedings.

Thus it is evident, that in both these constitutions, whom they would they slew or cast out, and whom they would they kept alive or admitted : but they may be assured it shall yet be enquired, what manner of men these were, whom they thus pretended to slay or cast out, Judges viii. 18. men who not only resembled, but actually were the servants, yea, the sons of Zion's King. It would have been their wisdom rather to have said, as Paul spake in another case, Acts xxvii. 31: ' Except these abide ' in the ship, ye cannot be safe.'

I judge it expedient to take this opportunity (of doing as the men of Hezekiah did with some of Solomon's proverbs) to copy out here some of the last works or writings of the foresaid reverend Mr Ralph Erskine, copied out of Job's hymns, of which he is the author.

S O N G XXXI.

Reproof to reproachers.

Job xix. 2, 3, 22.

1.

W H Y, cruel friends, will ye so long
with bitter words me vex,
My name reproach, my virtue wrong,
My righteous cause perplex?

2.

Must still your answers without sense,
and void of argument,
With solemn grave impertinence,
my spirit thus torment?

3.

Can pious lies deserve applause
by being spoke aloft?
Or do you think them true, because
you humm'd them o'er so oft?

4.

The wounds you give me cruel are;
your contumelious words,
And slanderous taunts, are sharper far
than keenest pointed swords.

5.

God's right t' afflict him well becomes;
but your afflicting rod,
With pride and passion base, assumes
the privilege of God.

S. O N G XXXII.

Friends turned to enemies, and brethren to aliens.

Job xix. 11,—14. Comp. ch. xvii. 4, 6.

1.

G O D's trying fury kindles bright,
 ev'n of his own accord;
 'Gainst me, whose heart and cause is right,
 he waves his glitt'ring sword.

2.

Fierce troops and regimented woes
 in battle-rank I see,
 Do by his order me inclose,
 And fiercely rush on me.

3.

Brethren and kindred knit their brows,
 and treat me as unknown;
 Break nature's bonds, renounce their vows,
 and their own blood disown.

4.

Familiar friends, and kins-folk too,
 who kindly me embrac'd,
 Have fail'd me, and forgot me now,
 and all their friendship past.

5.

Disdainful striplings me despise,
 who honour'd me before;
 Yea, those I once did chiefly prize
 now chiefly me abhor.

6.

Just Lord, from their reproaches, please
 to vindicate my name;
 And mercifully cover these
 Perfidious friends with shame.

S O N G XXXIV.

Rash judging condemned : or, Job's warning to his censur'd friends.

Job xix. 28, 29.

1.

O FRIENDS ! your groundless rage suppress ;
the wrath of man is proud,
And worketh not the righteousness,
but brings the wrath of God.

2.

Rash judging him in whom is found
the sacred matter's root,
Your darts will on yourselves rebound,
to 'venge the wrong pursuit.

3.

Of justice' sword stand you afraid,
when by th' almighty drawn ;
His vengeance will your heads invade,
not on your treach'ry fawn.

4.

In fierce uncharitable zeal
you're furiously devout ;
But cover'd fraud God will reveal,
and to the flames allor.

5.

Know that the day approaches fast,
in which the Judge Supreme
Will all your bloody censures cast,
your bitter words condemn.

6.

Repent then, lest your violence
bring present judgments home ;
Else will your proud impentence
foretell your future doom.

S O N G XLIII.

*Job solemnly maintaining his integrity against the false
accusations of his friends.*

Job xxvii. 2,----6.

1.

A S God Creator lives who now
to judge my cause denies ;
Th' Almighty, who my vexed soul
with sharp affliction tries :

2.

While in my nostrils breath remains,
which God inspir'd at first,
No wicked guile shall by my lips,
Nor falsehood be express'd.

3.

I'm slander'd by my cruel friends,
their censures underly,
Chag'd with hypocrisy and fraud,
and crimes of deepest dye.

4.

Should I acquit their calumnies,
absolve their slanderous tongue,
Confess their libel stuff'd with lies,
my innocence to wrong ?

5.

Forbid it, heav'n! so black a charge
of crimes to me unknown,
I, to my last expiring breath,
will stedfastly disown.

6.

This my rejoicing still shall be,
the testimony clear,

And

And conscience of integrity,
I in my bosom bear.

7.
Reproachfully they me accuse,
but from approved sin

My judge shall me acquit, as does
his justice court within.

S O N G LIX.

[*Light in darkness: or, God's favour in man's fury; a digression, applying the subject of song LIX. to some known occurrences of our day.*]

Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

1.
G R E A T is the majesty of God,
and greatly to be fear'd ;
The voice of his afflicting rod
with rev'rence must be hear'd.

2.
Oft took we his great name in vain :
How justly then he tries,
By raising men, our names to stain,
with libels full of lies !

3.
But love, in-laid with chastisements,
ill projects undermines,
And mercifully circumvents
the wrathful man's designs.

4.
Some bloody bulls, in this rude age,
will, to the end of time,
Stand chronicled, for pride and rage,
that fed the desp'rate crime.

5.

Stern justice, turning friends to foes,
 makes them against us mad ;
 Yet mercy brings our well from woes,
 Our bliss from what is bad.

6.

God makes the wrath of men to flame,
 for ends they do not know ;
 Our rich improvement is his aim,
 but their's our overthrow.

7.

When wild reproachers would us class,
 and damn with devilish elves,
 Their unjust censures make us pass
 just censures on ourselves.

8.

Their cruelty makes us more kind
 than e'er we were before ;
 Their lies and falshoods make us mind
 to value truth the more.

9.

Their lawless fury makes us trace
 God's just and holy laws ;
 Their causeless rage makes us confess
 his anger's righteous cause.

10.

Disorders, that with them prevail,
 make us good order seek ;
 Their passionate and fiery zeal
 makes us sedate and meek.

11.

Their lofty aims to domineer
 make arrogance our dread :
 Their seperating ways endear
 our union to the head.

12.

Good from their ill, beyond their ken,
 through grace, to us doth rise :
 Their madness makes us sober men,
 their folly makes us wise.

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C O P Y
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L E T T E R S
T O

The Rev. Mr *Alexander Moncrieff* Minister at *Abernethy*.

REVEREND and dear Sir, this comes acquainting you, that I have read and considered your letter, which you directed to your friend at Aberdeen, dated Nov. 3. 1758: wherein you discover a very wrong and uncharitable frame of spirit towards those who see not eye to eye with you anent that matter of doubtful disputation, to wit, the religious clause of some burgess oaths. May I not, with reverence and humility, ask you, What fruit have you in those things whereof you and your brethren have ground to be alarmed? I mean your rash condemning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, or the true religion presently professed in this realm; together with your new constitution of synod, and your pretended censures or sentences of suspension, deposition and excommunication, anent the above matter of doubtful disputation, which you so tenaciously justify

stify and vindicate in the above letter, pages 22d, 23d.

Sure I am these are not the means appointed for informing the judgment anent such matters. See Phil. iii. 15, 16. ' Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you : Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.'

Yea, though your constitution were right, and not schismatical and disorderly, the above means are only to be used towards persons who are guilty of sins or scandals that are open or manifest, which he that runs may read ; and not with respect to those matters or questions which are of doubtful disputation, even among the most zealous, learned, and experienced members of the synod, who are hearty friends to a covenanted reformation, and have a gospel-becoming walk and conversation, and are far from being guilty either of error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, or tyranny in the exercise of government or discipline ; you yourselves being judges, cannot accuse them of these.

Would any wise or reasonable man take a fore-hammer to that which a pin or pen-knife would more easily effectuate ? I mean, Would not a friendly conversation and reasoning, in a way of conference and prayer, with your brethren [which you and your brethren slighted, yea rejected and despised again and again †] have more easily and effectually answered the end anent the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the said oath, than all your pretended

† See for proof of this, pages 33d and 45th of the synod's act for supplies 1749.

tended censures or sentences of suspension, deposition or excommunication, which have no shadow of foundation any where but in your own imaginations.

Consider also, that your brethren, who differ from you, are as clear to justify and vindicate the lawfulness of the said oath, as you are to condemn it as sinful. Likewise, it is dangerous to remove such an antient land-mark, set by our reforming forefathers. See Mr Rutherford's mind on this or the like head, in his Divine right of presbytery, page 6th, near the foot. 'The church, in those things where the morality is not clear, at farthest can but go to directive advices, as Paul doth, 1 Cor. vii. 6, 12. not to imposing of laws, nor to injunctions or commandments, under the pain of church censures: for Christ must bind and ratify in heaven all church censures on earth; and so the church cannot command nor censure, but as Christ himself would command or censure.'

Possibly you will object, What do we say when you (though the minority of the synod) do see the said religious clause to be sinful?

I answer, if you or they think and see it to be sinful to you, indeed it is sinful; but to make your private views (in matters of doubtful disputation) a rule to others, or to put this yoke upon the necks of your brethren or disciples, even under pain of present suspension or deposition, in case they see not eye to eye with you presently, though, in singly lying open for light, they see that you and your brethren are in a gross mistake; this is evidently cruel and tyrannical, though your constitution were right, and not schismatical and disorderly. What would Mr Moncrieff have said, if the church had obliged or commanded him to renounce

nounce his ordination vows before he got that new light whereby he has done it? I shall suppose, that one synod makes an act, appointing all under their inspection to esteem one day above another; and the next synod makes an act, appointing all under their inspection to esteem every day alike: would any of the above decrees or acts be binding on the consciences of their people, unless the people were fully persuaded, in their own minds, both against the lawfulness and expediency of these decrees? Rom. xiv. 5.

Were I joining with your party, and approving of your new constitution and pretended censures, I should think I were writing a copy to posterity for the grossest schism, division, confusion, disorder, and tyranny to take place in the church habitually, whenever any were crossed or contradicted by a plurality of votes in any matter, or in any Presbyterian court, whether session, presbytery, synod, or general assembly.

Had you or your brethren been hindered from dissenting or protesting against what you thought amiss in the conduct of the synod, or had they refused to mark your said dissent or protestation, or had the synod been commanding and obliging you or your brethren to renounce your new light against the supposed sinfulness of the burgess oath, then you might have had some shadow of reason for your new constitution, though the minority; but this you cannot alledge; for you had full and free liberty to exoner yourselves this way.

Remember also how unjustly (in this respect) you dealt with, and treated your brethren in the presbytery at Lesly, before the breach in 1747, by violently and practically refusing to mark their protestation and appeal to the synod; and yet you pretended

pretended to be keeping Presbyterian order, when you was going into the greatest disorder. See page 60, 61. of Fancy no faith. I look upon the above treatment to be a direct overturning of Presbyterian order. Mean time it is ground of thankfulness, that some, who joined with you (in your new constitution, and in smiting your fellow-servants and brethren, and in plowing and drawing long your furrows on their backs) have openly acknowledged, that their wrath on that head has been cruel; and their anger outrageous; and that verily they have been guilty concerning their brethren, anent the foresaid pretended censures.

Your new constitution puts me in mind of a question which the Pharisees proposed to Christ, Matth xix. 3, 9. 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' So may we say, Is it lawful to separate from a right constituted church or synod for every fault? If this were the case, then we must needs go out of the world, for we will get no church faultless. Far less have we ground to separate, when the fault is only supposed or imaginary, and not real. And were I not fully persuaded in my own mind, that your foresaid new constitution and pretended censures have no foundation or warrant from the word of God, or our Presbyterian principles and constitution which is agreeable thereto; I say, were I not clear as above, I durst not venture thus to withstand you to the face.

It is not for want of love or due respect to you and your brethren that I dare not venture to call any man father, (I mean lord of my conscience) * one being my Father which is in heaven; or any * man master, one being my master, even Christ. Matth. xxiii. 9, 10. And however weak or unworthy I be, know for certain, that when you offend,

send, or cast a stumbling-block before your brother or brethren, you offend Christ; 1 Cor. viii. 12. 'But when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.'

Remember what your dear friend and intimate acquaintance Mitchel Greig of St Andrews said of you after the breach, and in consequence of your new constitution: he said, he never thought that the Rev. Mr Alexander Moncreiff had so little Presbyterian blood in his veins, as to countenance a constitution so directly contrary thereunto.

You make the hearts of those sad, whom the Lord 'doth not make sad.' May you not suppose that it is as a sword in our bones, when you say unto us, Where is your God? No doubt you and we both have provoked the Lord to leave us; yea, it is to be feared that the Lord is departed from us both in a great measure, though we be not duly sensible thereof, nor affected therewith, as it was with Sampson, Judges xvi. 20. 'And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.' Notwithstanding, I hope there are a goodly remnant who will be helped through grace to constrain him to abide with us, yea, to refuse to let him go till he bless us; yea, we hope he shall yet be brought to our mother's house, to the chambers of her that conceived us.

But possibly you will think it strange if I inform you, that some have assurance of God's love, or peace of conscience, in withstanding you to the face, because of your schismatical constitution and pretended censures, whereby you have caused division and sown discord among the Lord's servants and people, merely because they see not eye to eye with you anent the foresaid clause of some burgess oaths. And this is the reason why we withdraw from you: and we have a warrant for so doing; see it in Rom.

xvi. 17. ' Now we beseech you, brethren, mark
 ' them which cause divisions and offences contrary to
 ' the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid
 ' them.' Was it ever before heard of, that any of
 the most tender or scrupulous of the Lord's ser-
 vants or people scrupled at, or were offended with,
 the said oath; and far less with the religious clause
 thereof, or with the true religion therein pro-
 fessed.

Page 12. You say the martyrs of Jesus have been
 helped in all ages to maintain a faithful and
 uniform testimony; but did you ever hear or read
 of any one of them that testified against, or scrup-
 pled at, the religious clause of the burghers oath.
 This indeed is a new and unprecedented testimony
 of your own inventing. The case is not so with
 respect to the abjuration oath; for it has been scrup-
 pled at, and testified against, from the beginning
 thereof in Scotland, by many of the Lord's servants
 and people; not from any love to or desire after a
 Popish pretender: no; for they did and do ap-
 prove of the civil allegiance in the burghers oath,
viz. in being true and leill (or faithful and honest)
 to our present sovereign king George. I say the ab-
 juration oath has been scrupled at, and testified a-
 gainst, by many in Scotland; because that (in their
 view) it homologates and approves of these articles
 of our union with England which are contrary unto
 or inconsistent with the solemn league and covenant
 of the three lands (or these isles of the sea, which we
 yet hope shall wait for God's law); and because the
 said oath bears a reference to an act of parliament,
 wherein our king is obliged to be of the communion
 of the church of England, which we chuse not to
 consent unto or approve of, especially by oath.

Besides, the said oath is, in some respects, so very extensive, that it is difficult (I had almost said impossible) for persons of our station or capacity to swear it in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. See pages 45, 46, of the act and testimony.

And in case that any should question your approbation of the civil allegiance in the burghers oath, or of the laws of the land authorizing the true religion therein professed, here follows your subscribed declarations again and again in your joint representation 1732, anent addressing the king and parliament for redressing some grievances: these following words are used by you and them:

‘ We are hopeful it will not fail of the desired
 ‘ success, when we have such a gracious sove-
 ‘ reign upon the throne, who hath solemnly en-
 ‘ gaged inviolably to maintain and preserve the fet-
 ‘ tlement of the true Protestant religion, with the go-
 ‘ vernment, worship, and discipline, rights and pri-
 ‘ vileges of the church of Scotland, as established by
 ‘ the laws made in prosecution to the claim of right,
 ‘ and particularly in an act entitled, *Act for se-
 ‘ curing the Protestant religion and Presbyterian
 ‘ church-government*, and by the acts passed in the
 ‘ parliament of both kingdoms for the union of the
 ‘ two kingdoms’. See also your joint representa-
 ‘ tion to the assembly 1733: you have these words,
 ‘ page 34. Disclaiming all ‘ declared enemies to our
 ‘ excellent Presbyterian constitution, and disaffected
 ‘ to the late happy and glorious revolution, and to
 ‘ the Protestant succession in the illustrious house of
 ‘ Hanover. Page 35. Judging the act complained
 ‘ of to be a dangerous thrust at our Presbyterian con-
 ‘ stitution, and of a fatal tendency towards the
 ‘ revolution interest in Scotland. Page 60. We
 ‘ are not convicted of departing from any of the re-
 ‘ ceived principles of this church, or of counter-
 ‘ acting

' acting our ordination vows and engagements,
 ' Page 61. We were ordained to take the oversight
 ' of them (namely, our respective congregations)
 ' with their own call and consent, and with the
 ' consent of the presbytery unto which we were re-
 ' ceived, and have not been convicted of receding
 ' from our ordination vows and engagements.'
 All this is expressly adopted in the act and testi-
 mony.

Again, the profession of Seceders is declared to
 be the same with the profession of the revolution
 church in the first testimony by Mr Alexander Mon-
 crieff, &c. in the following manner: ' It is not
 ' very pleasant to us (page 47) that we are obliged
 ' to lay open the sinful and unwarrantable steps of
 ' such who profess to be of the same Presbyterian
 ' denomination with ourselves, and to own the same
 ' confession of faith with us, &c.' Strange! if our
 testimony hath changed its nature so soon, that now
 it is a sin in Seceders to have the same profession
 with the revolution church as such. Page 84. ' By
 ' our ordination vows and engagements we are
 ' bound to assert, maintain, and defend the doc-
 ' trine, worship, Presbyterian government, and
 ' discipline of this church. How can we be faith-
 ' ful to these vows, and yet be silent spectators of
 ' the deep wound that is given (page 67) to our
 ' beautiful Presbyterian constitution? Page 85. All
 ' the ministers of this church, when they are or-
 ' dained to their office, do solemnly promise, en-
 ' gage, and subscribe it with their hands, that they
 ' shall, to the utmost of their power in their station,
 ' assert, maintain, and defend the doctrine contain-
 ' ed in our confession of faith, and our Presbyterian
 ' church government and discipline; and that they
 ' shall never endeavour, directly or indirectly, the
 ' prejudice

‘ prejudice and subversion of the same. Page 98.
 ‘ We own the Protestant reformed doctrine, publicly professed in the church of Scotland, summarily contained in our confession of faith, &c.’

But how amazing and surprising is it that you adventure to say, that our covenants cannot be renewed by those who maintain the lawfulness of the burghers oath, without rushing into the most awful perjury and impiety? This is what you can never make evident to any man, far less to every unprejudiced man, as you undertake, page 15.

On this head I shall put you in mind of that check which Moses got for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, or without warrant, though the meekest man in all the earth, Num. xx. 12. ‘ And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.’ But what a check or double bridle do those need who are naturally very passionate, and sometimes in very ill case to rule their own spirits? We have much need to mind that ‘ the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.’ Ja. i. 19, 20. ‘ He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls,’ Prov. xxv. 28. ‘ For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry,’ Titus i. 7.

What a check did Elijah get for adventuring to say, that all were worshippers of Baal but himself! yet the Lord had reserved ‘ seven thousand which had not bowed the knee to Baal,’ 1 Kings xix. 10, 14, 18. Remember the rashness and uncharitableness of Job’s friends in forging lies against him, and fathering hypocrisy upon him. Also the rashness of David, though

though a man after God's own heart, in calling all men liars. See Peter's rashness in taking upon him to rebuke his master, Matth. xvi. 22, 23. Little did the honest man know, that the devil was speaking out of him, or making use of his tongue. See also the rashness of the disciples of Christ, without any warrant from him, Luke ix. 49, 50. 'Master, (say they) we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto them, Forbid him not.' No doubt you have read or heard, how Luther, in his fiery zeal for reformation, reproached Calvin, saying, that he was as a devil, transforming himself into an angel of light.

But possibly you will *object*, and say, What is all this to the purpose? does this prove that you are guilty of the above or like faults and rashness?

Answer, Does not your asserting (without the least shadow of proof, or due evidence*) that your brethren, who see not eye to eye with you anent the foresaid clause of some burges's oaths, are betrayers or deniers of Christ, and of the whole of a testimony for his cause and interest; that they are rushing themselves or others upon the most awful perjury and impiety; yea, your asserting that the Lord was not, or is not, among them, and that their meetings are mere associations against God and his cause, and declarative glory †. Pray, what proof or authority have you for this? or what worse could you speak or say of the vilest society of men upon earth? Do not the above grievous things, which you unjustly and uncharitably lay to your brethrens charge, prove, that you have spoken unadvisedly with your lips;
or,

* See for this, page 12th and 13th of the synod's act at Stirling, Oct. 29th 1749.

† Pages 15, 18, 19. of your letter.

or, that you have forged lies, or fathered hypocrisy and dissimulation upon them ?

Dear Sir, have you and your brethren no remorse for thus bearing false witness against your neighbour ?

‘ Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow,’ Prov. xxv. 18. Pray what fruit have you in speaking thus against your brethren, and slander-
ing your mothers sons ? Psal. l. 20.

I own it is very difficult to reach a conviction to a minister, and far more difficult to convince or make church judicatories to blush, though never so guilty or faulty : but as for that schismatical and pretended court, which drew its first breath upon the 10th of April 1747 in Mr Gibb’s house, and then and there breathed forth threatnings and slaughter against all the ministers and office-bearers in the association (who would not condemn the synod for passing two votes contrary to their mind), and such as would not approve of their new constitution, and rash condemning of the religious clause in some burgess oaths ; it may truly be said of them, as in Zeph. iii. 5. latter part of the verse, ‘ The unjust knoweth no shame ; yea, they refuse to be ashamed.’ And if ever Prelacy was adopted or patronized by any set of men whatsoever, the same is practically embraced and practised by the said new constitution, under the greatest pretences of zeal for Presbyterianial church-government.

‘ If it had been an enemy that had thus reproached us, we could have born it : but thou, a man, a minister, a guide, ‘ an acquaintance with whom we took sweet counsel, and went into God’s house ‘ in company,’ Psal. lv. 12, 13, 14. May we yet hope that the Lord, who has been provoked to
break

break the staves of beauty and bands, shall yet make us one stick in his hand; and that he will give us to be of one heart, and of one way in him; and that the wall shall be built even in such troublesome times as these. Many such things are with him, however improbable or impossible like they be with us: the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. I pray that the Lord may convince you and your brethren of the evil and error of your present schismatical and calumniating ways. May the Lord, that chose Jerusalem, rebuke that reproachful spirit by which you and they are or have been acted, though possibly you be not sensible thereof, as it was with Peter in the case above-quoted.

Also many in their simplicity are following your schismatical way; as those did, who followed Absalom ignorantly, not knowing that he was rebelling against the king, and seeking to kill or murder his father.

I earnestly beseech and intreat you and your brethren, to do with your public writings on this subject, and with your new constitution acts and pretended censures, as those did, of whom we read Acts xix. 19. who brought their books together and burnt them before all men. I am persuaded the cost will not be so great, and I am sure the duty is as plain, for you and them to maintain such a testimony against yourselves, as Augustine did, by retracting and condemning your rash, harsh, and false writings on this subject. See also Moses's example for this, Deut. ix. 21. 'And I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burnt it with fire, &c.'

Secondly, The above-quoted scriptures, made mention of before the objection, clearly prove, that the Lord sees meet sometimes to permit the nearest

and dearest of his servants to slip or fall both in their words and deeds, to let them know the pride of their own hearts: see also for this, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. 'Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' And is it any breach of charity once to alledge, that, in this business of the burges's oath, the Lord has, in some measure, left you and your brethren, to try you, and to let you see what extremes you will run into when guided by your own spirits, and to let you know your own weakness, and the blindness of your understanding, and that you know but in part? See Samuel's weakness in judging anent Jesse's sons, 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7: As also to discover unto you and others, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Howbeit, I am persuaded that the wrath of good men, as well as the wrath of bad men, shall redound to the praise and glory of God, Psal. lxxvi. 10. Mean time, no thanks to either of them.

What an awful like thing is it to see a man venture to pray when he is evidently in a natural passion? or to hear men praying for a blessing from the Lord upon sentences or censures, which are passed only according to the will or humour of men, but not according to the will or word of God? sure in this respect they ask amiss. There is something more here than a taking of the Lord's name in vain. The fasting and praying that is of this sort, is certainly to fast and pray for debate and strife, and to smite their fellow-servants and brethren under the fifth rib, both in their reputation and offices.

More

More might be said on this head, which I forbear, because my dear brethren and others, who are carried away with the dissimulation of the said new constitution, are not able to bear or believe, at present, all that may justly be said on this head.

Is the above a lifting up of holy hands without wrath and doubting? 1 Tim. ii. 8. It is rare, if not impossible, for a man to speak both the words of truth and soberness, while he is in a natural passion. I am not speaking of a lawful anger or passion, like that of Phinehas, which was against a sin which was open and manifest to all the congregation of Israel, Numb. xxv. 6, 7, 8. this was no sinful or mere natural passion, neither was it about any matter or question of doubtful disputation. Your furious and fiery pretended censures put me in mind of the viper that came out of the heat and fastened on Paul's hand, Acts xxviii. 3, &c. Possibly you or some others thought, that your brethren would have swollen, or fallen down dead, after you had fastened your censures upon them: yea, some might think, surely these are murderers, or blasphemers, who have such heavy censures or sentences passed against them. But may we hope, that you and others will change your mind, after that you have looked so long and see no harm come to them thereby, but much sin and ground of shame to yourselves. I am no prophet, nor prophet's son, yet I dare venture to say, that your wrath, or fiery zeal and passion, and your brethrens, on this head, shall be counted to you and them for folly (and not for righteousness) in after generations.

Thirdly, The foresaid citations prove, that as these saints were not perfect nor infallible, so neither are you; and therefore you should beware of judging your brother, or setting at nought your brethren,

thren, who are otherwise minded, and see not eye to eye with you anent matters of doubtful disputation; James iv. 11, 12. 'Speak not evil one of another, brethren: he that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?' See also the mind of the general assembly 1643, which, I hope, you will acknowledge to be a reforming assembly. 'The said assembly prohibits and discharges the condemning one of another, in such lawful things as have been universally received, and by perpetual custom practised, by the most faithful ministers of the gospel, and opposers of corruption, in this kirk, since the first beginning of reformation to these times.'

If I be not mistaken, you seem to be too much led or actuated by your own spirit; yea, in some respects, you seem not to know what manner of spirit you are of; but discover yourself to be much of the spirit of those who desired to have fire brought down from heaven to consume the Samaritans; which spirit Christ condemns and rebukes in New-testament disciples, Luke ix. 54, 55. We ought indeed to commend ourselves to every man's conscience, as we have access and opportunity; but not to any man's corruption or humour.

May I be allowed to ask of you a few questions?

Quest. 1st, Is not the true religion presently professed within this realm? This, I hope, you will grant and not deny.

Quest. 2d, Is not the said true religion plainly authorised and established by the laws of the land? yea, is it not so authorised and countenanced by lawful

lawful authority, that we have access to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty ?

And does not this include the whole of the true religion ? And this you and we do acknowledge in the following manner, in the synod's answer to Mr Nairn's dissent, p. 50. *viz.* that such security is given by the present civil government, unto our religion, lives and liberties, as no other people now on earth enjoys the like.

I heartily wish that the true religion were as well rooted in the hearts of the generation, as it is warranted, authorised and established by the laws of the land.

Quest. 3d, Does not the established church of Scotland profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him ? do they not openly declare their adherence to, and approbation of, our Westminster confession of faith and catechisms larger and shorter, form of church government, and directory for worship * ? though, in many respects, in works they deny them, especially in their judicative capacity, both by sins of omission and commission, which are the causes of our secession from them ; for we have not seceded from them because of their above profession, but because of their acting and walking contrary thereunto, and their refusing to mark and record reasons of dissent or protestation against their said disorderly practices ; as also, because of their casting out of the church those who were wrestling and contending against the foresaid evils, in a way of communion with them ; and, in thus shutting us to the door, they refused us liberty to plead with our mother church, in a way of communion with them. And these two last mentioned, *viz.* their hindering or refusing to mark and record dissents or protestations, and their casting them out of the

* This is the national profession of religion, and there is no other at present authorised by the laws of this realm. This you own, p. 10.

church who were wrestling with them that way, I look upon as two chief grounds of our secession from them; for by their said conduct they were not only doing evil, but smothering and bearing down all testimony or witness against the same. Yea, they were and are thus slaying the witnesses. Did they ever cast out of communion with them erroneous Simpson, or the like of him? No, they kept him in communion with them, though he was a blasphemer. These are some of the grounds of our secession from them, and not their foresaid profession.

See the reverend Mr Wilson's mind, who gives a certain sound on this head; and, though he be dead, is yet speaking, page 65 in his defence, where his words are; 'The seceding brethren have always refused that they made any secession from the church of Scotland, if the church of Scotland is considered as her principles are held forth from the word of God, in her confession of faith, larger and shorter catechisms, form of church government, directory for worship, and other laudable acts and constitutions of this national church; the seceding ministers have openly declared and acknowledged their adherence to all these in their judicial act and testimony.'

Do you think that we are to renounce our baptismal engagements to the above profession of religion, or to the true religion presently professed in this realm? No; we resolve, through grace, to hold fast our profession without wavering. I say, do you think we are to renounce our said engagements, as you have renounced your ordination vows †? though you declare your adherence to your said

† Page 34th of your animadversions on Fancy still no Faith.

said ordination engagements in the Act and testimony, page 9th, and other papers, as above.

I think strange how some can speak so rashly or falsely of our mother church, as to alledge, that they are not professing the true religion. I hope better things of them; yea, I hope there are a goodly number therein, not only professing, but allowing and approving of the said true religion with their whole hearts.

You alledge, pages 9th, 10th, that our professing the true religion presently professed in this realm, is contrary unto, or inconsistent with, our professing an adherence to a covenanted work of reformation; but this we refuse, because you may as well say, that when we add to our 'faith virtue,' and to virtue knowledge,' we add something to our profession contrary thereunto, or inconsistent therewith, which we did not profess before. Yea, we resolve, not only to profess the said true religion, but to abide thereat, and defend the same to our lives end: or through grace to be faithful unto the death; which is the common sense and meaning of the above expressions. But if the Lord's servants and people be helped and directed to the renovation of our covenants in a consistency with, and agreeableness unto, the only rule which is given to direct us therein, then they may be indifferent about other supposed or imaginary inconsistencies, Eccles. xii. 13.

What a strange notion is it to alledge, as you do, page 13. that when a person declares upon oath that he professes and allows with his whole heart the true religion presently professed in this realm; to assert that his said oath bears an homologation and approbation of all the defections and corruptions of those who profess the said true religion?

gion? You may as well say, that you hemologate and approve of all the defections and corruptions of those who join with you in the bond of the covenant. You accuse the burgeses, or those who maintain the lawfulness of the burgeses-oath, of renouncing the whole of the testimony, page 18. and yet there is no mention of the burgeses-oath in all the testimony; no, nor yet in the present bond nor acknowledgment of sins prefixed thereto, for renewing the covenants. Wherefore it is evident that in this respect, as well as in many others, you accuse us falsely, and lay things to our charge we know not.

Possibly you, or some others, will *object*, But does not folks professing the true religion, and in works denying it, make an alteration in the said true religion? so that it is not safe to profess the true religion which they profess.

I answer, Does folks professing to know God, and in works denying him, make any alteration in him who is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, without any variableness, or shadow of turning? As little does folks professing the true religion, and in works denying it, make any alteration in the true religion, or in the only living and true God, who is the author thereof. And tho' others in their practice give the lie to their profession, yet it is our duty to profess the said true religion, and to confess and own that we are worshippers of the said true God, and to adorn our said profession and confession with a gospel-becoming walk and conversation, saying, 'As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord,' Josh. xxiv. 15.

Objec. But is it not said, (2 Tim. iii. 5.) of those who have a form of godliness, and deny the power thereof, we are commanded from such to turn away?

I answer, True, it is said from *such* turn away, but it is not said, from *it* turn away, to wit, from godliness, or from professing the true religion,

Object. But does not every sect or sectary profess that their religion is the true religion? and the words *true religion* are, or may be, misapplied or misconstrued: therefore it is not safe to profess the said true religion.

Ans. Is there no true religion, because every sect or sectary profess that their religion is the true religion? Then the devil, by transforming himself into an angel of light, may, by his servants or children, make a greater profession or appearance of religion, than any or many professors.

Secondly, Mr Moncrieff himself owns, page 10. that there is no other national profession of religion at present authorised and established by the laws of this realm, but the true religion which we profess; so that the professor or swearer needs be in no doubt or dubiety about what he is professing or swearing unto, to wit, to the true, Protestant, reformed religion, contained in the scriptures of the old and new Testament, and briefly summed up in our Westminster Confession of faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, Form of Presbyterial church-government, and Directory for worship. These, and these only, are acknowledged, as above, by Mr Alexander Moncrieff, to be the true religion authorised by the laws of this realm; and this is not the profession of every sect or sectary; yea, this is only the profession of Presbyterians in Scotland.

Thirdly, The pure and undefiled religion (James i. 27.) contained in the said scriptures, are often and ordinarily wrested and misapplied: shall we therefore renounce, or refuse to profess the said pure and undefiled religion? Such a way of arguing or

reasoning has a direct tendency to make folk think or believe that there is no true religion at all, or that there is no reality in religion. Little does the Rev. Mr Moncrieff know what he is doing in this respect, or where he is driving himself and his followers.

What man or minister in all the association is so changeable, or given to more changes, than Mr Alexander Moncrieff? For instance, he was once zealous in adhering to his ordination-vows; now he is zealous for renouncing them: he was once zealous for the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the glorious and happy revolution-church; but now he is zealous against it as such: he was once zealously pleading and asserting that he was a member, yea a minister, of the established church; but now he is for holding or esteeming them as heathen men, or publicans: he was once seceding from them, because of their disorderly walk and practice; but now he is for witnessing against their whole profession, as if it were antichristian.

You have a frequent repetition, in this and other papers, of the following or like questions, *viz.* Is not a swearing of contradictory oaths sinful? Is not perjury sinful or censureable? Is not contumacy, or neglecting to hear the church, sinful? Is not betraying and burying a testimony for truth, and against error, sinful? Is not denying of Christ sinful?

Ans. What person of common sense or reason will refuse or deny the above to be sinful or censureable? But, according to your view, are we hence to infer or assert, that the burghers-oath is a sinful or contradictory oath, or that they are guilty of perjury who swear it, or maintain and defend the lawfulness thereof? or that a refusing to hear or submit unto your new and schismatical constitution

of

of synod, is a neglecting or refusing to hear the church, or a betraying and burying of the whole of a testimony for truth and against error, or a denying of Christ? You may as justly say, that because the sixth commandment says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' therefore we are murderers; or because the seventh commandment says, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' therefore we are adulterers, without any other or further proof: so that to believe such doctrine out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicate faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

Strange! what a pass are we come to, by ministers who seem to be in a spiritual rage or fever? Is not the generation hardened in sins that are open and manifest, by seeing and hearing such bitter and sharp contentions about matters of doubtful disputation? I say, what a pass are we come to by these upon the one hand, and scoffers and mockers upon the other? 'We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us; we are made a strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves,' Psal. lxxix. 4. and lxxx. 6. May I not venture to say, that a dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, might warrantably forbid the same? 'Open rebuke is better than secret love,' Prov. xxvii. 5. Yea, Balaam, though a noted servant of the devil, durst not adventure to curse those whom the Lord had blessed, as some have presumed or pretended to do, and seem to glory in that which ought to be their shame. This, when an awakening time comes, may stare you and your brethren in the face. For my part, it is a mystery to me how some men, yea ministers, have peace in some

of their ways of doing; but it will be a greater mystery, if they die without remorse.

Is not the blood of your brethrens characters and offices to be found in your skirts? and had you the civil sword in your hand or power, it is to be feared we should find the weight thereof, because we will not bow to the image which you have set up, I mean your Diana the new constitution, which you and your brethren of like occupation have been crying up, all with one voice, these twelve years and more, Acts xix. 34. You are not sensible how much wood, hay and stubble, you have built on this foundation: and I can inform you, yea you may be assured of it, that the foundation will not abide the fire, far less the superstructure which you are building upon it, to wit, the condemning of the true religion presently professed in this realm, together with the renouncing of Popery. And though you and your brethren may obtain forgiveness, and get your souls for a prey; yet you may be assured that the Lord will take vengeance on your sinful ways and inventions, Psal. xcix. 8.

You are zealously affected in this affair, and your zeal thereanent hath infected very many; so that I may justly say both of you and them, 'that you are zealously affected, but not well.' Think not that 'I am become your enemy, because I tell you the truth,' Gal iv. 16, 17. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. xxvii. 6.

Possibly some may enquire, why I do not design you (in the title page) minister of the gospel? The plain reason is, that I am sure it is not all gospel you publish on this subject; tho' possibly you be not sensible thereof, but readily think it is all true you say. Elihu says, 'Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person,

‘ person, neither let me give flattering titles to man;
 ‘ for in so doing my Maker would soon take me
 ‘ away,’ Job xxxii. 21, 22. No man is bound to
 believe his father when he lyes.

Object. But is it not very uncharitable and indecent, yea very insolent, to alledge, that the Rev. Mr Alexander Moncrieff is guilty of lying, or bearing false witness against his neighbour or brethren.

Ans. I own it is very unbecoming the character of a minister, and far more unbecoming a professor of divinity, or teacher of young divines, to be guilty of lying, or to be a false accuser of the brethren. *Secondly,* Is it uncharitable or indecent to say that Abraham was guilty of lying, Gen. xii. 13. xx. 2. or that David was guilty, or had some sleight this way, 1 Sam. xxi. 2. xxvii. 10. or that Peter was guilty of swearing both rashly and falsely, Mat. xxvi. 72, 74. And Mr Moncrieff is as evidently guilty (in my view) as any of the above, however insensible he or his brethren are thereanent. I do not say, that the above examples are written for our learning: no, they are written for our warning, and to let us see what extremes even the best will run or fall into, when left to themselves, or to the power of temptation; which should teach us to pray, that we be not led into temptation, or that the Lord would support and deliver us when we are tempted.

But somewhat follows, yet more strange: pages 22, 23. you assert, that the highest censure of the church was absolutely necessary, not only towards those who were swearing or maintaining the lawfulness of the burghs-oath, but that all who are in conjunction with the burghesses are materially under the highest censure of the church: tho’ the greatest part by far of those who are in conjunction with them have no call nor occasion to touch, taste or handle

handle the said oath, further than by adhering to the true religion, and performing their baptismal engagements, viz. our wives, and women-servants, and children, and many others.

Some also have openly and practically declared, that though it be evident that the burghs-oath is lawful, yet they would not judge it expedient at present to swear it, though they had a call thereunto: But, it seems, nothing will please you, unless they see, and declare it to be sinful, even though it be evidently lawful in their view. Strange tyranny, thus to lord it over the consciences of your brethren or people! May I not say, 'how forceable' are right words! but what doth your arguing re-
 " prove? The curse causeless shall not come,' Prov. xxvi. 2. May we obtain grace to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us; saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

You put me in mind of the cruel words of a certain tyrant, who wish'd that all his subjects had but one neck, that he might cut them all off with one stroke. Likewise, your above assertion plainly proves, that in this respect you know not what manner of spirit you are of.

Meantime I heartily desire, that the burghesses and others may obtain grace to say, our conversation (or burghs-ship) is in heaven, our trade and treasure is there also. Oh for grace to believe, that the merchandise of Christ, and things above, is better than the merchandise of silver; and to win Christ, and to be found in him, is a better revenue than the finest gold: I say, did men believe this, how would they fly unto Christ as a cloud, and as doves to their windows. Verily it is the safest, yea, the most in-
 riching

riching way of counting, to count all loss for Christ. Oh, for grace on solid ground, to say, ' Truly our
 ' fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son
 ' Jesus Christ;' then might we say to all our oppos-
 ers, (and, in particular, to those who pretend to
 excommunicate or cast us out of the church) John
 ix. 34. 3 John 9, 10 ' Associate yourselves, and ye
 ' shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together,
 ' and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and
 ' it shall not stand, for God is with us,' Isaiah viii.
 9. 10.

Now, however you may be puffed up with the im-
 plicite faith of some, who are so simple as to believe
 every word that is spoken or written against the
 burgeses-oath, or the burgeses, without weighing the
 same duely, as the noble Bereans did; or with the
 flattery and tale-bearing of others, who have been,
 or may be crouching about your hand for a piece of
 bread, by obtaining the honour of being put into
 the priests office; I say, however you may be lift-
 ed up this way, yet your writings on this subject,
 have no weight in the balance of the sanctuary, so
 far as I can discern.

I have read of a certain great man, who was so
 bewitched with the flattery of his servants or cour-
 tiers, that they endeavoured to persuade him, that
 his spittle was as sweet as sugar or honey; and, in
 order to convince him thereof, some of them licked
 it up before his face.

May I now ask you, Where has your pen been
 this long time with respect unto the overture anent
 the alledged mistakes in the act and testimony? Do
 you not behave, as if the said testimony were per-
 fect or infallable; or, as the laws of the Medes and
 Persians, unalterable? We receive and embrace it

as an help, but we do not chuse to make it our only rule, far less to justify or vindicate any inadvertent or historical mistakes, which, upon due search, may be found therein.

But what your view is in comparing the burghesses to Jeroboam, page 21. who made Israel to sin, I know not. You yourself may easily discern, whether or not the comparison or allusion be right or reasonable. Do you think, that our professing the true religion, is a state or church-politic, to keep us from worshiping or serving the true God according to his own appointment; as Jeroboam's making the calves at Dan and Bethel was; for he knew very well, that if any of his subjects preferred Jerusalem to their chiefest joy, they would soon turn their backs on him and his calves both. We have no such worldly baits or temptations, however worldly or covetous you reckon the burghesses. Notice likewise, how far you have followed Jeroboam's example in this, that he made priests of the lowest of the people, 1.Kings xii. 31. And, in this respect, have you not got heaps, or heaped to yourselves, teachers and keen defenders of your new constitution? But if they approve not of your new constitution, then you have no service for them, though otherwise never so well qualified and fit for the work of the ministry; yea, on these you pour contempt and reproach.

Page 19. You say, the instances of Miriam and Korah, and his followers, are awful and remarkable to this purpose.

Ans. I suppose you could not have chosen a scripture more fit for judging and condemning yourself and your brethren of the new constitution: for what was Korah's sin? was it not that he and his followers rose up in rebellion against Moses and

and Aaron, and took too much upon them, by usurping an authority which did not appertain or belong unto them. And this you and your brethren have done with a witness, in a strange and unprecedented manner, by seeking to lord it over your brethren, in the faithful exercise of their office as a synod. See and mind what the Lord says, Isaiah lxi. 8. 'I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering.'

Secondly, Did not Korah and his followers refuse to obey Moses, Numb. xii. 16. when he sent and called for them? And so did you and your brethren refuse again and again to obey the synod, when called by them to the duty of conference and prayer, in order to their coming, through the Lord's pity, to see eye to eye in the matter of the said religious clause. See for proof of this page 33. and 45. of the synod's act 1749. As for Miriam, she was guilty of accusing Moses rashly and falsely, Num. xii. 8. And so are you verily guilty of accusing your brethren both rashly and falsely in many instances.

But if your meaning be, that our refusing to submit unto or approve of your new and schismatical constitution and pretended censures, are as evident acts of rebellion against God and his word, as Korah, Dathan and Abiram's was, Numb. xvi. 1. 2. &c. then you are in a gross mistake or delusion. For my part, as I have hinted already, I would be afraid to hold up or fasten one of the stakes or pins of such a schismatical court; for, if I did so, I should think I were guilty of as gross a breach of God's law as those were guilty of who worshipped the golden calf which Aaron made.

Dear Sir, were you following the Lord fully or wholly in this controversy, how cheerfully and willingly would I follow you? but I am obliged to

leave you, and to follow your master, as he clears up my way from his word, unto which nothing, at any time, is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

But if it be objected or enquired, how shall we know who is right or who is wrong? for Mr Moncrieff declares that he and his brethren take the word of God for their only rule, and it is more than probable that he and they know the Lord's mind and meaning in his word better than you; I answer, 'We speak as unto wise men, judge ye what we say.' As the noble Bereans did, Acts xvii. 11. 'For the ear trieth words, and the mouth tasteth meat,' Job xii. 11. (2.) There is a way of noticing the Lord's mind in his word, 'in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err. If the eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light.' (3.) Let us seek light singly, and guide it tenderly. (4.) Let us beware of our own spirits; for it is 'the meek he will guide in judgment, and to the meek he will teach his way,' Psal. xxv. 9. (5.) There is a way of knowing the errors and crooked ways both of good men and bad men, and that is by their fruits. Notice the fruits of the new constitution. 1st, The sowing of discord among the Lord's servants and people, who are hearty friends to a covenanted work of reformation. 2dly, The separating of chief friends, and causing division. 3dly, An uncharitable disposition in those who are carried away and bewitched, Gal. iii. 1. with the dissimulation, Gal. ii. 13. of the said constitution; who think in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, saying, as it were, 'Stand by, for we are holier than you.' 4thly, An usurpation of a lordly dominion over the consciences both of ministers and people. 5thly, An introducing

introducing of implicate faith and blind obedience to their acts and decisions, under pain of present suspension or deposition, &c. 6thly, The racking and distracting the minds of many of the Lord's people : so that it may make our ears tingle to hear of the above fruits and effects of the said schismatical constitution.

For my part, I think it is as easy (for those who know and impartially consider Presbyterian principles) to see and discern the evil and error of the said new constitution, as it was for the Israelites to see the evil and error of Aaron's making the golden calf, and saying, ' These be thy gods, O Israel, ' which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

No doubt it might be objected, that Aaron knew more of the Lord's mind than any in the congregation ; and yet a child or school-boy could not have offered a more pitiful excuse than Aaron did for making the calf, Exod. xxxii. 24. ——— ' So they ' gave it me, then I cast it into the fire, and there ' came out this calf.'

Howbeit, I am not alone in this matter ; for there are a great cloud of witnesses testifying against the said constitution and pretended censures ; yea, able ministers of the New-testament, some of whom not only seemed to be pillars here below, but are now pillars in the temple above † ; and though they be dead, are yet speaking and witnessing against the said constitution, with as much clearness and freedom as Luther said of Rome or Popery, viz.

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Living

† To wit, the late reverend Mr Ebenezer Erskine minister of the gospel at Stirling, Mr Ralph Erskine minister of the gospel at Dunfermline, Mr James Johnstone minister of the gospel at Dundee, Mr Henry Erskine minister of the gospel at Falkirk : who, having served their generation (in their said sphere and station) according to the will of God, are fallen asleep in Jesus since the said breach 1747.

Living I stopt Rome's breath, and dead shall be Rome's death.

Notice also, the sandy foundation, or chief corner stone, of the said new constitution, &c. viz. the carrying of the following vote or question in the negative, in the associate synod, April 9. 1747. 'Whether the decision anent the religious clause in some burges's oaths, passed by this synod in April 1746, shall now or afterwards be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, ay and until the making of the same to be so shall be referred, by way of overture, unto prebyteries and kirk-sessions, in order to give their judgment thereanent, that so there may, in the meantime, be a friendly dealing among the members of this synod with one another, in a way of conference and prayer, in order to their coming, thro' the Lord's pity, to see eye to eye in the matter of the said religious clause.' I say, the synod's refusing, as above, to make the said decision a present term of communion, is the sandy foundation, (including Mr Thomas Mair's declaration, which he took upon him to make, without leave asked from, or given by, the synod) or chief corner stone of the said new constitution, cemented with the blood of their brethrens characters and offices who would not run with them to this schismatical and disorderly constitution, which consisted only of 23 members, whereas the synod's sederunt consisted of 52 members before they separate from them. See for proof of this page 4th and 5th of the synod's act for supplies 1749. I say, their wrath was so hot, and their anger so outrageous, merely because their rash decree was so muzzled or bridled, that they could no longer sit with their brethren, but went up to Mr Gib's house, and there got such rays

of new light, or rather darkness, which never yet could abide the light of God's word, being utterly incapable of scripture proof; I mean their new and schismatical constitution; whereby the Lord, in righteous judgment, answered them according to the idols of their hearts: and thus, by their breaking the hedge of Presbyterial order, he suffered the serpent to bite or beguile them, Eccles. x. 8. 2 Cor. xi. 3.

It is recorded to the honour of Israel, that at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they rested and abode in their tents, and did not journey, except in the case of those who went presumptuously up the hill, at which time Moses testified against them, and expressly forbad them, which the synod likewise practically did, with respect to their brethren, who schismatically and presumptuously separate from them on the 9th of April 1747, and went up to Mr Gib's house on the 10th. I say, the synod practically testified against them, by their sitting still in Bristo church, where they first constituted the said synod, upon the 7th of the said month of April, and continued their meetings in the said church to the 10th or 11th of the said month, and then adjourned to meet at Stirling.

It likewise has a speaking language, that the reverend minister formerly mentioned, who took upon him, without leave asked or given, to declare, that the power of the associate synod was devolved upon him and his brethren, who were condemning the religious clause of the burghs oath, and went up to Mr Gib's house, as before observed: I say, it has a speaking language, that the said minister has now no power, nor part, nor share, nor voice in any synod or presbytery whatsoever, for the present,

sent ; though I own it is better to be no member of any synod, than to be a member of one that is schismatical and disorderly.

It is likewise observable, that this rash decree or decision, in calling the religious clause of the burgeses oath sinful, was carried by mere stratagem, on the second week of a synod, when more than one half of the constituent members were absent (see for proof of this page 33d of the synod's act for supplies 1749) and even then was solemnly protested against by several members of the synod, as a sinful decree or decision, and could never since abide the judgment of the associate synod when fully met. It is likewise to be noticed, that the reference thereof to the synod was likewise clandestine, or in a thin meeting, without the advice or consent of the majority of the members of the presbytery from which the reference came. See for proof of this page 115. of their own acts, &c. Certainly there must be error in judgment, yea in the judgment of that thin synod, in calling the religious clause of the burgeses-oath sinful, when, upon the strictest search, it is found evidently lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, and the good and wholesome laws both of church and state. Sure your tenaciousness in continuing to call it sinful proceeds from something worse than an error in judgment ; there seems to be something else at bottom than the condemning of the said religious clause : it is known to yourself whether or no the knotty point, &c. &c. be the thing you had or have chiefly in view.

Your conduct in this affair puts me in mind of the conduct of Israel, when there was no king or magistrate in the land to put them to shame ; every man did that which was right in his own eyes, Judg. xxi. 25.

You

You know there is no general assembly in the association at present, to censure or put you or your brethren to shame for your rash, and schismatical, and calumniating conduct: but do not you and we profess to be on the road to the general assembly and church of the first-born †? what a pity is it then that you or we should fall out by the way, or discover a spirit so unlike to the spirits of just men made perfect? yea, do we not expect and hope to come unto Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant? 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye our joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,' Philip. ii. 1, 2.

Page 10. you accuse the synod of giving an express allowance to all under their inspection to swear the religious clause of the burghers-oath.

Answer. You are mistaken or misinformed in this respect. But, *secondly*, If a synod should forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving; would it be any crime in the next synod to inform those who are under their inspection, that this is not sound doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 3. and also to acquaint them that God had created these, to wit, marriage, and meats, to be received and used with thanksgiving? Or could any hence infer, that the synod had expressly appointed or commanded all under their inspection to marry, or to eat such and such meats, unless the people see it both lawful and expedient to do so? Even so, the associate synod on this head have declared, that the religious clause in the burghers-oath may be sworn in truth, righteousness and judgment, by those who judge it expedient

to

† Heb. xii. 23, 24.

to swear the same. This is all the express allowance which you or any other can justly talk of. See act of the associate synod met at Stirling, Oct. 29. 1747, pages 22, 23.

Object. But might not the religious clause in the burghers oath be laid aside or renounced for peace sake, seeing it gives such offence to many of the Lord's servants and people?

Ans. Indeed, if it were a matter indifferent, such as the eating or not eating of flesh, we might or ought to say, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'

But, Secondly, If the burghers oath were a sinful or contradictory oath, then it should in any ways be laid aside and renounced: but to renounce or refuse to profess the true religion presently professed in this realm, which is agreeable unto, and founded upon, the word of God, and plainly authorised and established by the good and wholesome laws of the land: I say, to renounce, or to refuse to profess these, this indeed is a mere temptation, and might justly be constructed a renouncing of our baptismal engagements; yea, this would be a material renouncing of the act and testimony, which is lifted up in defence of the said true religion; so that it may be amazing or astonishing to hear tell of such a proposal, which is so far from having any weight in the balance of the sanctuary, that it is lighter than vanity, even in the balance of common sense or reason. See for proof of this the foresaid act of synod, Oct. 29. 1747, pages 22, 23.

Page 10. it is observable, that in quoting of the religious clause of the burghers oath, you deal unfair, by keeping out the renouncing of Popery, which follows in the foresaid clause, even tho' you acknowledge, p. 25. that

that we are threatened with an inundation of Popish idolatry (you might have added, and tyranny). No wonder though you endeavour to conceal your foolishness and rashness in condemning the renouncing of Popery, which you and your brethren, by your rash decision in April 1746, have declared to be sinful, as well as the professing of the true religion. Sure if there be any reformation in condemning the religious clause of the burgess-oath, then our reformation thereanent is not by a Presbyterial, but by a Prelatic spirit, if not a worse, 3 John ix. 10.

It is likewise observable, that schism is not particularly nor expressly renounced and abjured in the present bond and acknowledgment of sins for renewing our covenants. Whether it has been industriously or inadvertently kept out, I shall not determine; but in this neglect, as also in some others, we have not gone forth by the footsteps of the flock, to wit, our reforming forefathers.

And I hereby inform you, that you will not get regularly forward in covenanting work without the burgesses; yea, I am pretty certain God hath provided some better way † for us, so that you, without us, shall not get forward after the due order; 'for, because you did it not right at the first, God hath made a breach on you and us both,' 1 Chr. xv. 13. 'But judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all right-hearted burgesses and others shall follow after it.'

Objection. But do you notice the harmony and unanimity of the members of the new constitution in their acts and proceedings in Mr Gib's house? is it possible that good men can be harmonious or un-

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animous

† I mean a way more conform to the scripture-pattern, and likewise more conform to the footsteps of the flock, to wit, our reforming forefathers.

animous in any evil thing, or in any bad work or cause ?

Answer. Notice the harmony and agreement that took place betwixt Simeon and Levi (Gen. xlix. 5, 6, 7.) while instruments of cruelty were in their hands and hearts ; yea, their wrath was cursed and cruel, and their anger outrageous, Gen. xxxiv. 25.

2dly, It is observable, in your acts and proceedings in Mr Gib's house, you say again and again, that you find your brethren have cast away or lost all power of (or title unto) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c. And this puts me in mind of that which Joseph's brethren said unto their father of of Joseph's coat, ' Lo, this we found, know if it be ' your son's coat,' Gen. xxxvii. 31, 32. Here are ten men, the sons of an Israelite, indeed harmoniously agreeing to impose upon their father, by framing and forging a gross and manifest lie willingly and wittingly ; and this continued in for more than 22 years as before observed. Notice also their harmony in stripping Joseph of his said coat, and dipping it in goat's blood. And so you, and your brethren of the new constitution, pretend to strip the synod of their synodical power, by dipping your hands in the blood of their sacred offices and characters, which is to be found in your skirts.

Objection. You say in some of your writings, that the synod's decision, anent the said religious clause, was one of the overtures for peace : and what difference (may some say) is there between an act and sentence of synod, and an overture ?

Answer. The difference is very great and considerable ; for, had your decision or act of synod been brought forward in the form of an overture to the synod, then the synod could, with honour and credit, have amended or corrected it ; yea, they might have received or rejected it according as they found just ground,

ground; none of which they can easily or honourably do after it is enacted and declared by the synod to be sinful: yea, you may see what perverse disputings and evil surmisings you have been guilty of in your answers to the reasons of dissent and protest which were given in against your said decision; and much more perverseness and evil surmisings has taken place in framing and defending your new and schismatical constitution, merely because your said decision is not approved or made a present term of communion. It is ordinarily given as an evident mark of a bad state, when the person or persons are averse or unwilling to have it brought to the touchstone or trial of God's word. So it is a certain mark or evidence of a bad church act or decision, when the framers or makers thereof are averse or unwilling to allow it to be duly and timeously weighed in the balance of the sanctuary by presbyteries and kirk-sessions, especially before it be made a term of communion.

O! for pity to a generation who are saying, that there is no reality in religion; no reality in the saving operations of thy Spirit on the hearts of thy people; no reality in communion and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. O! that these who think or speak so would but come and see; then might they experience, that the very grape-gleanings, which are to be found about Christ's hand, his house and doors, are better than the vintage of the world.

Thus I am prest to speak and to invite them, who are saying, as it were, Can any good come out of Galilee? or can any good come out of the secession? or is there any good to be got among the Seceders, who are every where spoken against, whose contentions are so sharp, that they have departed asunder one from another? But this we hope the Lord will over-

over-rule; for the good of Zion, whatever failings be among the Seceders. He has glorified his name in Scotland, and we hope he will glorify it yet again.

I do hereby likewise inform you, that now, after deliberate consideration, I see it my duty to declare my adherence unto the following copy of a letter on the same subject written by me, and directed to one who was a member of your new constitution, but is now withstanding you and them to the face, and testifying against your said constitution and pretended censures: and though you and your archers have shot sore at him and his brethren, yet their bow doth abide in strength, and their arms are made strong by the hand of the mighty God of Jacob; so that they have ground to set up their *Ebenezer*, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped: this snare is broken, and we are escaped.

The letter follows,

C O P Y
O F A
L E T T E R
T O

The Rev. Mr *Alexander Moncrieff* Minister at *Abernethy*, or any present Member of the *New* (or *Pretended*) Synod, &c.

[*Second edition, with enlargements.*]

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I AM sorry our contentions are growing so sharp, that, in all appearance, we are departing asunder one from another (*a*); yea, there seems to be little prospect or probability of our meeting in judgment, while sojourning here; matters being carried on in such a violent and disorderly manner by those you join with. And tho' it is to be feared, that any thing I say will have little weight, considering how little regard is paid by those you join with, to that which your reverend fathers and brethren have said on the head; their words and writ being accounted by your party as idle tales, if not worse: yet as I desire to be ready always to give a
A reason

(*a*) Acts xv. 39.

reason to every one that asketh me (b), so I desire likewise, in my station, to say to Archippus, or to our reverend ministers, ' Take heed to the ministry ' which you have received of the Lord, that you ' fulfill it,' Col. iv. 17. So your late servant having acquainted me, that you was desirous I should write my mind to you anent our present difference or situation; I shall freely and ingenuously give you my mind thereanent.

As, *first*, With respect to the synod's sentence, anent the religious clause of some burges's oaths, I look upon it as rash and unguarded; yea, though the matter and design thereof were good, yet I would think it my duty to testify against the violent manner of carrying on the said sentence and act, as a manifest breach of good rules and order in the church, Phil. ii. 3. ' Let nothing be done through ' strife or vain-glory; but, in lowliness of mind, ' let each esteem another better than himself.' As also contrary unto the barrier acts (c), of which they were frequently put in mind.

Also

(b) 1 Peter iii. 15.

(c) Assembly at Edinburgh, August 30. 1639. Sess. 23. *Act anent advising with synods and presbyteries, before determination, in novations.*
 ' The general assembly considering, that the intended reformation
 ' being recovered, may be established, ordains, That no novation,
 ' which may disturb the peace of the church, and make division, be
 ' suddenly proponed and enacted: but so as the motion be first com-
 ' municate to the severall synods, presbyteries and kirks, that the
 ' matter may be approved by all at home, and commissioners may
 ' come well prepared, unanimously to conclude a solid deliberation
 ' upon these points in the general assembly.'

Assembly at St Andrews and Edinburgh, Aug. 6. 1641. Sess. 14.
Act anent novations.

' Since it hath pleased God to vouchsafe the liberty of yearly general assemblies, it is ordained, according to the acts of the assembly at Edinburgh 1639, and at Aberdeen 1640, That no novation in doctrine, worship or government be brought in or practised in this kirk, unless it be first propounded, examined and allowed in the general assembly: and that transgressors in this kind be censured by presbyteries and synods.'

Also I think it my duty to testify against their refusing to allow their said sentence and act to be duly and timeously weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, by presbyteries and kirk-sessions. I say, I look upon this refusal as smelling rank of a lordly dominion over your brethren, the thing being new, and of doubtful disputation, even among the most zealous, learned and experienced members of the said synod (d). And if those you join with continue

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Also contrary unto the Confession of faith, chap. III. sect. 4.
 ' All synods and councils since the apostles times, whether general
 ' or particular, may err, and many have erred : therefore they are
 ' not to be made the rule of faith and practice, but to be used as an
 ' help in both '

(d) How perplexing and difficult must this then be to the weak of the flock, and contrary unto Rom. xiv. 1. ' Him that is weak in the
 ' faith, receive you ; but not to doubtful disputations.' I say, has not the rash and hasty making and pushing of this act (as a term of Christian communion) a direct tendency to rack or distract the minds of many of the Lord's people, or involve them in the guilt of implicate faith, and blind obedience or submission? I am not speaking without book on this head : for I was an ear-witness, where I heard the above act (materially and publicly) made a term of Christian communion, and that even before ever the synod answered the reasons of protest against the said act. Yea, this was delivered with the first public notes that ever I heard that reverend and worthy minister, Mr Alexander Moncrieff, deliver from our pulpit on that head, declaring, (to this purpose) That if we saw not the sinfulness of the religious clause in that oath, or were not singly lying open for light, so as to see the same to be sinful, (no supposition was made of any possibility or probability of seeing the said religious clause to be lawful) then we were unworthy, or unfit for approaching unto the Lord's table. I make no doubt of his design being good : also it is with grief of heart that I am obliged thus to withstand the said reverend and experienced minister of Jesus Christ. But if ministers (or matters) be allowed to go on at this rate, then we may have new terms of communion every day, and from every pulpit, without the advice or consent either of synod, presbyteries or kirk-sessions. And if this be agreeable, (especially with respect to matters of doubtful disputation) either unto the word of God, or our Presbyterian principles and constitution, then I have lost my skill (and understanding) of both. And whatever high pretences of zeal some are making on this head, yet I can instruct, that (in some respects) they are but straining at gnats,

nue to vindicate their above refusal, then we have no such approved custom in the church of Scotland in her purest times, 1 Cor. xi. 16. ' But if any man ' seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, ' neither the churches of God.'

Secondly, As I look upon the said act to be rash and unguarded, so I look upon the late separating and rending of the associate synod, which was done by those you join with, to be much more rash and unwarrantable.

I make no doubt of their design, and yours, being good; neither am I so uncharitable as to think that you or your brethren would knowingly do evil that good might come.

But

and swallowing camels, with respect to sins that are (and have been) open and manifest, which he that runs may read.

N. B. I have tried private conversations, yea sessional petitions, representations and protestations, which have been either smothered, or rejected, or unanswered; before I took this step. (This was in Mr George Brown's time, a little before he usurped a negative over the session.) And, durst I hold my peace, or could I get myself duly exonerated, by sighing in secret, no man should hear my voice, or see my writ in this manner. As also, I think it my duty to testify against these reverend brethren who are now practically saying Amen to the above new term of communion. Yea, how affecting and afflicting is it to see and hear some ministers so imprudent (or cruel) as to feed (or propose to feed) babes with strong mens meat, by mingling, (or defiling) their prayers, preachings and lectures, (or judicial acts, viz. as terms of communion) with matters of doubtful disputation, tending also to blast their brethrens reputation, and to gender strifes, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith. Though, I freely own, I have been informed and instructed by the writings which have been emitted on both sides of the question, especially those lately emitted by the reverend Mr Ralph Erskine, and others of his reverend brethren; yet, I think, it is very unsuitable to entertain people with such subjects at solemn occasions, especially such of them as have no call to touch, taste, or handle the said oath, nor capacity to understand the same, though declared unto them; and yet far more unsuitable, and unreasonable (presently) to make them terms of Christian communion.

But we may charitably think, that Uzza had as good a design as any of you; yea, it is probable he thought there was no other or better way of holding up the ark, when the oxen shook it, than the way he took; yet it is evident that his deed was rash and disorderly, 1 Chron. xiii. 9, 10. which should teach ministers and others to beware of putting to their hand to the ark, or work of God, in a rash and disorderly manner, without divine or scripture warrant, even at a time when those who bear the ark may be stumbling.

And this is it which chiefly offends and stumbles me, and many others, with your party, *viz.* your not contending and striving after the due order (e) *.

Yea, though we had a firmer of good designs, yet a bowe of them will not fill a lippy, so as to justify or extenuate the guilt of bad actions, or rash and disorderly steps. It ought to be duely noticed, that it is only a disorderly walk or tract, and not a disorderly deed or act, that will warrant even a withdrawing from any brother, 2 Thess. iii. 6. And yet far less does it warrant the breaking, or rending asunder, of an orderly and right constituted synod.

If matters go on at this rate, divisions and separations may be endless in a church, where no divisions ought to be.

Be it indeed that the synod had slipt or erred; was there

(e) 1 Chron. xv. 13.

* *Object.* Could there be any thing more disorderly, than that vote which was the occasion of rending the synod?

Answer. As matters then stood in the synod, there could be nothing more suitable for getting the oath deliberately and judiciously condemned, if sinful; or justified, if lawful; nothing more expedient, or more tending towards healing: I say, there could nothing (in my view) been more fitly or seasonably proposed for the above ends, or for preventing forward or self-willed ministers from lording it over the consciences of their brethren, or people who differed from them.

there no other way of recovering, but by breaking and rending them asunder? Is it the way to recover a man from a fall, to break his back, or to tear one of his legs from another? were all other doors and means of healing or conviction shut or blocked up?

Yet how melancholy is it to see some who have been chiefly instrumental in rending the synod, as above; I say, how melancholy is it, that they seem to glory therein, as some wonderful appearance or work of God for his church! Yea, they seem to behave as if their acts or decrees were perfect or infallible (*f*), and think it strange that we run not with them to the same extremes; speaking evil of us, yea and accusing us as apostates, or guilty of apostasy, as rejecters and despisers of the command and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; merely because we walk not willingly or implicitly after their commandments and traditions, or have not freedom presently or practically to submit unto or approve of their new constitution and acts.

I never thought that your brethren, or you, would have made so little bonds of keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. If you be to strive, why not; yet strive lawfully and fairly. Let us see for this 2 Tim. ii. 5. 'And if a man also strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.' Let us see also the 14th and 23d verses; 'Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.—But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.'

I

(*f*) Or, as the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable.

I look upon it as a noble and commendable strife, to strive against sin, 'to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, (to be valiant for the truth upon the earth,' Jude 3. Heb. xii. 3, 4. yea, it is a strife and contention in which we ought to resolve, through grace, both to live and die, Acts xxiv. 16.

Thirdly, Having read and considered your new constitution and acts, I am sorry I have ground to say, that your brethren with whom you join, and whose deeds and acts you either tacitely or verbally approve, have laid many and grievous things to their brethrens charge, which they cannot prove.

As for instance, page 10. of the *introduction*, line 4.—they insinuate or assert, That Mr Erskine's party do construct or explain our covenants as binding, or obliging to unity, without truth, or in opposition to the testimony of Jesus. Page 11. of the *act*, line 3.—they say, 'That their brethren were not asking understanding to discern judgment, and that there was no judgment in their goings; but that the Lord was provoked to leave them unto counsels of their own.' And line 31.—they say, 'They were awfully left of God to behave in open contradiction to the name and nature of a court of Christ.'

Page 20. near the close, they accuse their said brethren of assuming to themselves an arbitrary power, and employing it against Christ, and for burying his truth, cause and interest.

Yea, page 21. line 3.—they accuse them not only as subverters, but obstinate subverters, of that order which Christ hath commanded in his house.

Yea, which is yet more surprising, page 5. line 27. they accuse them as guilty not only of dropping, but even of abjuring, or allowing the abjuration of the whole of the testimony. Take

Take the above as a swatch of that which your brethren and you have inadvertently, yea uncharitably and unjustly, laid to your brethren's charge. How unlike is this to the character of a citizen of Zion, described, Psal. xv. 3. 'He that backbiteth
' not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour?'

How inexcusable and inconsistent are they in judging their brethren!

Do they not evidently and directly thereby condemn themselves, while they do the same or like things which they condemn their brethren for? Rom. ii. 1. As for instance, page 5. line 4. of the *introduction*, your party does grant and assert, that they were averse from the very thoughts of having the reasons of protest entered upon at Stirling; for this cause among others, that if once the reasons and answers should be formally entered upon at the synod, then there was still the less prospect of healing: consequently they, themselves being judges, do, by the above grant and assertion, judge and condemn themselves, for not going into some healing overture, rather than rend asunder and break the synod, merely because the said reasons and answers were not first, or formally, entered upon at Edinburgh.

Yea, page 5. of the act, line 8.—they accuse their brethren of voting, in these two votes, anent referring, by way of overture, the consideration of the said act to presbyteries and kirk-sessions, because they alledged they were parties in the said votes: and yet, page 5. line 36. of the *introduction*, your party does assert and affirm, that the above vote or votes was a point entirely distinct from what had been before conversed about. Yea, though it were true, which is evidently a mistake, that they were parties

parties in the said two votes; yet how comes it to pass that your party does, in the most violent and disorderly manner, sustain themselves, not only judges, but sole judges and condemners, of the said two votes (*b*); though they were directly and immediately parties, by their protestations against them: yea, this they do without regularly giving in their reasons of protest, or waiting the synod's answer, in defence of the lawfulness and expediency of the said two votes.

Yea, which is yet more inconsistent, your party does sustain themselves sole judges and approvers of their own answers; yea, sole judges and condemners of their brethrens reasons of protest, as if they were all spoken at random. Are they not inexcusable, inconsistent and unreasonable, in the above or like respects? I say, are not the above steps, not only disorderly, but fertile of disorder, as certain, also, of your own party have said † on another head (*i*).

Yea, I doubt much, if ever the parallel of such a groundless and rash separation was ever heard of, accompanied with such a rash judging, and setting at nought, of those who differ from them, Rom. xiv. 10. 'But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.'

'Tis to be feared, yea, I had almost said, it seems glaringly evident, that there's more humour, and party or precipitant zeal, in the above new constitution and acts, (something like that in Luke ix. 49,

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(*b*) Viz. By separating, and rending the synod, as above.

† Viz. Mr Adam Gib writing against Mr Whitefield.

(*i*) This is the disorderly way that your party comes HARMONIOUSLY to conclude matters, p. 11. of the introduction to the act.

50, 54, 55. (k), than true zeal or matter of conscience. And whatever reverence or respect I owe to you, and your worthy and learned brethren, whom I love and desire to honour; yet I owe no reverence nor respect to sin, wheresoever or in whomsoever I see it.

Upon the whole, it seems evident, that the anger of the Lord hath divided us: we have much need to seek of the Lord, that he would shew us wherefore he contendeth with us. Certainly there is a cause; doubtless Israel hath sinned, and committed a trespass in the accursed thing; which ought to cause great searchings of heart among us. Our zeal, as well as our faith, ought not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power, and on the word of God (l). Also, we may see from 1 Cor. xiii. 4. that charity vaunteth not itself, or is not rash, as in the margin.

Gal. iv. 16, 17. 'Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the TRUTH? They ZEALOUSLY affect you, but not WELL.'

(k) Luke ix. 49. 'And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.'

Ver. 50. 'And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us.'

Ver. 54. 'And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?'

Ver. 55. 'But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.'

(l) 1 Cor. ii. 5.

A P P E N D I X.

I Shall further propose and answer some objections which are ordinarily made on this subject.

Object. We wonder you are not wearied, or altogether discouraged from speaking or meddling further with the church, more especially with the public contentions or divisions that are taking place therein, considering how much opposition and contradiction you have met, or may expect to meet, with therein, both from saints and sinners, yea, from ministers ?

Ans. None but the searcher of hearts, and my own heart, which knoweth its own bitterness, knoweth the weight that is on my spirit, while writing the above, and thinking on our broken and divided situation.

And were I not pitied of the Lord, and clear from his word, that it is my duty to speak and write as above ; I say, were I not pitied of the Lord, and clear as above, my spirit, which he hath made, would fail before him.

Also, I desire grace to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 3. grace, not to think it strange concerning this fiery trial, wherewith the Lord is trying his servants and people, 1 Pet. iv. 12. O for grace to count 'it all joy when we fall into divers temptations,' James i. 2.

I say, I desire grace to keep me from fainting in the day of adversity, by being strong, or strengthened with the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And however I may be despised by some, as in 1 Chron. xv. 29. 'Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked out at a window, and saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart;' or rashly judged by others, as in 1 Sam. xvii. 28. 'And Eliab was very angry with David, and said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart, for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.' I say, however I may be despised, or rashly judged, either by disciples or ministers of Jesus Christ, yet my witness and record is above, that, through grace, I have done what I could, in my station, for the peace and welfare of Jerusalem, which I desire to prefer to my chiefest joy, come what will.

All I shall say at present anent their rash judging, shall be, what Christ said to the disciples when judging rashly and harshly of the woman who anointed his feet, John xii. 7. Matth. xxvi. 10. 'Let her alone, Why trouble ye the woman?' I say, Let alone, and beware of judging another man's servant; but remember, that to my own master I stand or fall; and he is such a master, whose favour I would not forfeit for the favour or pleasure of none, whether godly or graceless, great or small. Oh that our hearts were saying unto the Lord, 'Truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant.' Methinks our hearts should say to Christ, as Abigail said to David, 1 Sam. xxv. 41. 'Let me be a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord.' Oh that folk knew Christ! I say, if they
knew

knew this gift of God, and who it is that is in their offer, they would certainly love and embrace him, notwithstanding of all the faults and failings that are to be found among his servants and disciples ; of which faults and failings we may blush and be ashamed, both before Christ and the world : and so much the more may we blush, when the same is told in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon, making the daughters of the uncircumcised to rejoice and triumph.

I remember, that when Christ asked his disciples, What it was they were disputing about by the way ? It is said, they held their peace, as being ashamed to tell him ; and no wonder, for by the way they had contended who should be greatest, Mark ix. 33, 34. I wish there be not too much of this spirit in our present contentings.

Object. It is reported, that the Seceders in Perth and Edinburgh are resolved to set their ministers to the door, and not to receive them further into their house, which they have built for public worship.

Ans. Whatever may be said this way, or whatever just ground they have so to do, yet I am certain, that hitherto they have done no such thing*.

But if our ministers, whom we love, and desire to honour, do bring in any new doctrine or discipline, any new or unprecedented constitution or acts, or new terms of communion, without showing us either precept or example from the word of God, or our Presbyterian principles or constitution, for the same ; then we are expressly commanded not to ' receive them into our house,' or bid them, ' God speed,' lest we ' partake with them in their sin,' 2 John x. 11. And as we account and adhere

* Viz. when the first edit. of this letter was printed, Sept. 1. 1747.

here to it as our duty, to encourage and strengthen our ministers hands in the faithful and diligent exercise of their ministerial office; so we likewise account it our duty to withstand them to the face, Gal. ii. 11. in the sinful or disorderly exercise of their said office. Shall we, for peace sake, call that which is evil, good, or that which is wrong, right? Wo to them that do so, Isa. v. 20.

We have been guilty of overvaluing our ministers, and have esteemed them more highly for their gifts, than for their master's sake, or for their work's sake; for which cause the Lord is now rebuking us, because we gave not him the glory due unto his name. Also, the above undue estimation of them has been a mean, it may be feared, of puffing them up with pride or self-will, of which we now see the bitter fruits by their usurping, Prelatic-like, a negative over the majority of their sessions. Are they not, in this respect, building again what they profess to destroy, viz. absolute or arbitrary church power, or a lordly or magisterial dominion over us, or over our faith?

I marvel to see ministers or people so soon shaken in mind; either by words, or new-fashioned constitutions, or acts or epistles. We use to say, A hasty made marriage is a sudden mitchief, which often proves true, to the experience of those concerned. For my own part, I am afraid to meddle with such as are given to such sudden and unprecedented changes and acts. I do not love such a moon-light flitting of synod; one would thought this was not the work of a day, let be a piece of midnight or moon-light work. Neither do I think it decent or orderly, especially for church judicatories, to have such long or unseasonable sederunts, where-
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by they weary one another, in some measure, out of their time and judgment.

Object. It is alledged by some, That our present opposition to the new-fashioned constitution and acts of synod, proceeds from love to, or desire after, the world, or the sweet fruits of burgesship, as some call it.

Ans. Though some have the assurance or confidence to speak and reproach us at this rate, yet I would ask them, or those burgeses who have sworn the said oath, and now count it sinful; I say, I would ask them, What do they more than others, who count the said oath lawful? Do they deny so much as a threed or shoe-latchet more than others? or do they part with or restore any of the said sweet fruits which they have gained by their said burgesship? or do they resolve not to merchandise or trade as formerly? If they did this, men might think they had ground to say, they were not so worldly as other men, or other burgeses.

Likewise, it is evident from the act of synod anent the said oath, that it would not take one farthing out of our pocket, to go all the length the synod there requires: How then can it be said, that our testifying against the said new constitution and acts proceeds from love to, or desire after, the world? I wish that those, who speak as above, would take more heed to their words, and mind, that they must give an account of all their hard or unjust speeches.

There are three things that make this act of synod, anent the religious clause of some burges-oaths, to *take* with the serious or simple, who are ready to believe every word.

First, It has a shew of zeal and strictness.

Secondly, It has a shew of being denied to the world,

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First, It has a shew of zeal and strictness.

Secondly, It has a shew of being denied to the world,

world, or worldly privileges, though, as we said, it does not call burgesſes, who are already concerned in the ſaid oath, to forego one farthing, either of the world, or worldly privileges, whatever coſt or trouble new burgesſes may be at, by their declining to ſwear the ſaid oath; and, in my view, it is unfair to lay this burden on their ſhoulders, while burgesſes, who count the ſaid oath ſinful, ‘touch not the ſaid burden’, that their younger brethren may be oppreſſed with, ‘with one of their fingers.’

Thirdly, This act is carried on by zealous miniſters, whom we have ground to believe would not deſire to do a wrong thing, or forbid us to do a lawful thing; yet miniſters, and diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, may be very far miſtaken in the exerciſe of their zeal, as might eaſily be ſhown, and may be ſeen, Luke ix. 49, 50, 54, 55. above, and other notour inſtances which might be named.

Sure your time and zeal is or may be better ſpent in pitying and praying for theſe lands, wherein there are ſo many thouſands that know not their right hand from their left with reſpect to any religion at all, than to ſpend ſo much of your time and zeal in condemning, or pretending to excommunicate thoſe, who profeſs and allow with their whole heart the true religion preſently profeſſed within this realm: I ſay, your time and zeal may be better ſpent in pitying and praying for theſe; and, in particular, for our armies both by ſea and land: for if the cloth be like the ſample we have of them, what an awful and heaven-daring ſpectacle are they, who daily and openly are blaſpheming that worthy name by the which we are called; ſetting their mouth againſt the heavens, and are often and openly calling upon God to damn them, or the devil to take them? Sure, if they obtain not repentance,
their

their damnation will be just. These declare their sin as Sodom ; they hide it not. What a wonder is it that the Lord does not make the earth open and swallow both them and us up ! and what a bad example do they get in the above respects from many of their officers and commanders, who should restrain and punish them for their blasphemy and swearing ! They neglect not to punish them for theft ; but he that said, Thou shalt not steal, said also, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. And however the above and other sins may escape punishment from them, or from magistrates, who in this respect bear the sword in vain, and count it no disturbance to human society, not minding that God is thereby greatly dishonoured and provoked : I say, ‘ however they may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.’

I do not say, that magistrates and officers can renew their hearts, or tame their tongues ; but I am sure it is in their power to bridle their tongues, and to reform their lives and outward conversations, and to give them a better example and pattern. This plainly is their duty, to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well ; and if they neglect this in their station, the sin lyeth at their door.

Let us see the Lord’s mind with respect to the man that blasphemed in the camp of Israel, Lev. xxiv. 11. and with respect to whoremongers and adulterers, these God will judge. And yet we will find adulterers and fornicators pleading from scripture-example, that it is lawful for them to have many wives or women. They instance David and Solomon, &c. especially considering, that David’s having many wives is not mentioned among his

other sins, but only his turning as *de to* Bathsheba in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

In answer to this, it ought to be remembered, 'that from the beginning it was not so,' Gen. ii. 18, 24. where the help meet for man is mentioned in the singular number; and that, under the old Testament, some things were winked at, which are now more expressly forbidden and discharged under the new. Likewise, the apostle says, 'to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, (not wives) and every wife her own husband,' and not more husbands than one at one and the same time. See also, for warning, Solomon's testimonial of **women**: he declares, that a man among a thousand he **found**, but a good woman among all those he had **not found**. And yet the scripture-motives and encouragement for women to be good is the greatest of any that I discern in scripture; for the good conversation of a woman adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is supposed to be instrumental in winning those who are not won by the word; so that, in this respect, women, who are not allowed to speak or teach in the church, nor to usurp authority over the man, may yet be instrumental in winning souls to Christ, while they behold their chaste conversation, coupled with fear †.

But, to return, let us see what came upon Eli's family, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, or frowned not upon them, as it is in the margin, 1 Sam. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14. Let us hear what Isaiah says, chap. iii. 8. 'Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.' And if we believe not these writings, I mean the scriptures, neither will we

† 1 Pet. iii. 1,—4.

we believe though one should rise from the dead ; the God of this world hath so blinded the minds of them that believe not.

And with respect to that open breach of sabbath that takes place, by speaking our own words, or finding our own pleasures on the Lord's day, the same is increased and encouraged, by allowing or permitting the post-masters in public cities to give out private letters to merchants and others anent ordinary business on the sabbath day. Is this remembering the sabbath day to keep it holy ? Or is it the way to get our king's throne, or our magistrates power and authority, established in righteousness ? I wish and pray, that the Lord may not be provoked to make one post run to meet another, with news or tidings that will make all our ears tingle. While many have such itching ears, and spend so much of their time on the sabbath day, in hearing or telling some new things. Many who are of this disposition, turn away their ears from hearing the truth, and give more head to fables, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. My call and warrant for noticing the above is Eph. v. 11. ' And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ; but rather reprove them,' 1 Tim. v. 22. — ' Neither be partaker in other mens sins ; keep thyself pure. Righteousness exaltrath a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people : take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness : it is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness, for the throne is established by righteousness,' Prov. xiv. 34. and xxv. 5. and xvi. 12. And though punishment against evil works is not presently or speedily execute, yet we should beware of provoking the Lord to jealousy ; are we stronger than he ? 1 Cor. x. 22. May we hope to see the day

when iniquity as ashamed shall stop its mouth, when the language of Ashdod shall not be heard nor winked at in our land; the time has been, may we yet hope it shall be, that holiness shall be written as it were upon the bells of the horses. Let us be encouraged to pray, that the Lord may make our rulers peace, and our exactors righteousness; and that he would go forth with our armies, both at home and abroad; and keep them and us from every evil thing.

Upon the other hand, some, who profess to be teachers in or about Perth, are crying down our fore said standards, to wit, our confession of faith and catechisms, as if they were not a form of sound words which we ought to hold fast, although they have had their praise in the churches of Christ for several ages. Sure, if we believe not these writings to be sound, we have far less ground (in my view) to believe their words. Also they are reproaching our most able and eminent ministers, such as the Rev. Mr Boston, and others like him; as if they, by their doctrine or writings (which, though they be dead, are yet speaking), were leading us to hell by a devout path. Such is the doctrine, such is the spirit of Palemon (or some Glaslites), page 436. of his or their book; who, though they be confident that they are capable to teach others, yet they themselves need to be taught right principles, and the knowledge of the truth. I am persuaded that none will believe the above doctrine, or be of the above spirit, but those who are given up to such strong delusion as to believe a lie. We have much need to pray, that we may be delivered from erroneous or unreasonable men: for as Janes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do many resist the truth; yea, some are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. vii. 8.

But

But to return, as for those who are Gallios in matters of God and religion, and care for none of these things, but have their chief delight in carnal mirth and pleasures; who chant at the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music; who drink wine in bowls, holding the bottle to their own or their neighbour's head; who tarry long at the wine or ale, even till the wine or ale, which are mockers, enflame them; their case is more to be pitied than envied; especially considering that drunkards and lukewarm persons, &c. are excluded from the kingdom of heaven; yea, they are dead while they are living.

Objection. But though we spend much of our time in the vintner's, or in the tavern and ale-house, yet we can drink, and not be drunk or overtaken therewith; and we have as much or more delight in the company than in the drink; yea, we may be as well employed in the ale-house as elsewhere.

Answer. As it is ill to be called a thief and ay found pickling, so it is ill to be called a drunkard and ay found tippling.

Secondly, Those who redeem their precious time are very averse from spending much of it in the tavern or ale-house; they likewise know, that the religion (or conversation about it) that comes off the gantress or out of the bottle-cellar is much to be suspected. I intreat you to mind Christ's words to his disciples, 'Beware, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, or with the cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares:' I say, beware of the above, which has a direct tendency to eat out the life of personal and family religion, and study to experience better and more refined pleasures, by being in case to say, 'We will go to the altar of God, to God our chiefest joy.'

Upon

Upon the whole, let not a graceless or lukewarm generation rejoice or bless themselves in our present divisions, accounting themselves happy while careless, or at ease in Zion; their state is more dangerous than they are aware. 'For if judgment begin
' at the house of God, what shall the end be of
' them that obey not the gospel? And if these
' things be done in the green tree, what shall be
' done in the dry?'

This, with my love and due respects to you, is from your assured friend, whether you think it or not,

GEORGE WILSON.

